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4/5/90

Dear Ms. Goldstein,

Melanson's Spy Saga is so very bad in so many ways you may find general comments difficult to accept. I've made notes in reading it. They are lengthy. They are enclosed with the copy of the manuscript I'm sending separately, as you asked.

First apologies for my typing. The eye surgery is the ^{least} of my problems. I'll be 77 in a few days, am recovering from open-heart surgery and have circulatory problems in both legs that require me to keep them elevated. This puts the typewriter to a side and makes for inaccuracies.

You may wonder if I am prejudiced. In a sense I am. I regard the assassination of a president as the most subversive of crimes in our society. I believe that as it imposes obligations and standards on official investigations of it it also imposes them on those of us who question the official investigations. Because the crime was never really investigated officially, there are few leads for private investigators to follow. Any private inquiry, however, to be responsible, must be within the parameters of actual fact about the crime itself. There is a simply enormous amount of information now available. I have obtained about a third of a million pages of once-withheld official records relating to this assassination and that of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They are accessible to anyone, and in practise this generally means those with whom I do not agree. This, of course, includes Melanson, who did get what he wanted from my King assassination records. This is not reflected in his The Murkin Conspiracy. He had no interest in this abundance of JFK assassination materials. He makes no mention of the extensive FOIA litigation by means of which all this material is now available to anyone, here or in the reading rooms he did use and thanks. I do mean by this to raise questions about his honesty and personal and professional integrity. It is the opposite of honest scholarship to append lengthy bibliographies and to make no mention of this most basic material. It is less than honest not to include it and how it became available in his expressions of appreciation.

Melanson presumes Oswald's guilt, as he did Ray's. He also assumes that each crime was the end product of a conspiracy. He does not in either book establish that either crime was a conspiracy. Beyond reasonable question, both were. However, being ever so much less of an authority than he pretends to be, he does not address the question of conspiracy in his writing. Instead he theorizes who did it with the accuseds.

In both books his theories are untenable as he presents them. In common with all the many conspiracies of which I know, meaning the theories, he inevitably deceives and misleads the reader. This is inevitable and I regard it as a great disservice to the

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nation. It imposes upon ^{popular} ~~their~~ trust as it does the trust of publishers. Neither the people nor publishers are in a position to evaluate such works and there are remarkably few authentic subject ^{experts} ~~experts~~ publishers can consult. Most of those generally called researchers are in fact conspiracy theorists and their work has been largely in support of the preconceptions with which they begin. Among those who have been published I am a minority of one in opposing conspiracy theorizing.

Whether or not there was a conspiracy is not at all the same as ^h ~~identifying~~ ^{identifying} alleged conspirators. If the crime was beyond the capability of any one person it was a conspiracy. (Melanson does not even define conspiracy correctly.) That there was a conspiracy does not identify those who conspired.

He appears to be generous in his acknowledgements and to fellow conspiracy theorists he is but aside from Sylvia Meagher, whose book is a truly great one and who is also dead, with the book long out of print, he acknowledges no debt to those who did the basic work in bringing fact to light yet he inevitably draws on those works. The others he thanks know nothing at all about the subject matter. Throughout the manuscript, where he credits other books - and not uncommonly he does not - he usually manages to avoid well-known first publication and instead cites later works that repeat what was published earlier. This pattern appears to be with a purpose.

He is quite generous to the FBI and CIA reading rooms and in both books he makes a big thing of his use of both. What is available in those reading rooms, as he does not tell the reader, is what others brought to light, often with long, difficult and costly FOIA litigation. He makes it appear that he has done the difficult work of getting access to the FBI and CIA records he cites, and ^{his} ~~the~~ dishonest and unscholarly failure to even mention what he well knows, that others did this work without which he could not have undertaken this book, leads the reader to believe that it was all his derring-do. The fact is that there is but a single thing in this book that he did bring to light and it is a triviality that he misuses and misrepresents, the number of employees the CIA had in New Orleans. All the other records of both agencies were already rescued from official oblivion for him and for others and were readily available to him without his going to those reading rooms.

He has been here, I gave him access to everything I have on the King assassination, made copies for him of whatever he wanted, and he saw the extent of my JFK assassination archive. When he asked for information then, by phone or mail, I sent it. It is I and I alone who brought the MURKIN records out, in a suit I filed in 1975 ^{that} ~~and is~~ still before the courts. He knew this and he knew what he got here but there is no reflection of this in The Murkin Conspiracy. In fact, some of what he got from me, FBI records, he misrepresents in that book to create what is essentially an untenable theory to fabricate a completely irrational conspiracy. If you are familiar with that book, a simple clue for you is that McDaulton, the "fat man," did not and could not hide his identity because the FBI had

disclosed it and he got that record from me, which identified McD^uldton to him.

I understand that he has sought and gotten assistance from the Assassination Archive and Research Center in Washington. There is no mention of it in his credits or notes.

All of this and more like it is consistent with an effort on his part to stake out a claim for owning the subject matter. The fact is that he is not an expert, except in cooking up amateurish and untenable theories and doing that with no taint of honesty or scholarship. His theory in this book is, as it was in The Murkin Conspiracy, ludicrous.

His ignorance on the subject-matter of this book is colossal. I have never doubted that Oswald could have had some kind of intelligence connection, but never as what ^{it} is to those agencies as an "agent." Although he avoids mention of it, he had to know that in my 1975 book I said that. And I was then limited to what the Warren Commission had published. He has none of that information in this book. More became available when, years before he got interested, first with access to the Commission's records and then through FOIA litigation, mostly mine. (I alone filed suit for the FBI's Dallas and New Orleans records with which he is really quite ignorant or he'd have used quite a few he didn't use. He not only makes no mention of this but he actually pretends in quoting a few of them that he got them from the FBI. Worse, he says, without any qualification, that some are still suppressed and they've been available, from me or from the FBI, for a decade.)

He presents himself as an expert on intelligence agencies but in fact quite a few novels are a much more dependable source on them and how they work and what they do and do not do. He hasn't the slightest contact with reality on this and he is spectacularly stupid about the realities in both books. I should say, that ^{side} from my work for the past 25 years, I was in intelligence and I was a Senate investigator and editor. He is living a fantasy in believing that he knows anything at all about intelligence and what emerges about it in this manuscript is laughable. And ridiculous. In both books.

There is much that is relevant in a book on this subject that is public and of which he knows that he omits because it is not consistent with what he has cooked up. One of the most glaring illustrations is his failure even to mention the name of Yuri Nosenko. Consistent with this, in his bibliography he makes no mention of my Post Mortem. I believe this is because it is in that book that I was the first to publish what this defected KGB official told the FBI about its suspicions about Oswald. There is much more but because you have read this manuscript and know its relevance, they suspected that he was an "agent in place," also known as a "sleeper agent." But Melanson could not use this and suppress the rest. I have a rather large file of Nosenko records I got under FOIA that he could have seen and copied here as well as in the FBI's reading room. He may not know what is in those records but he does know what is published and this does include a very considerable amount in the hearings of the House Assassinations Committee whose duplications

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of the works of critics he does use. But knowing about Nosenko how can he possibly^t be regarded as a serious scholar when he makes no mention at all of him and what he disclosed and of the rather voluminous now available records? He doesn't even know whether they could help him advance his theory that^{he} presents as fact when it isn't. I do regard^{this} as dishonest and not an accident. (See p. 7)

Even when it is a major part of this manuscript he is grossly ignorant of what is available and essential to it. Take of the numerous instances what I'm sure you'll remember, George de Mohrenschildt. He does cite one Dallas FBI 105 file, without^t any identification of what that file classification, 105, represents, or the title of the file number he cites. (In FBI filing, the first number is the file classification, the second is of the file within that classification and the third is its serial number, which he omitted but every^{ny} record has.) That is the "counterintelligence" file on Jeanne de Mohrenschildt. I ~~presume~~ presume he got this from Mrs. Robohn because I know of her interest. It comes out in this manuscript and ^{his} notes as his work. But there is a fairly large 105 file in Dallas, at FBI headquarters and in other field offices. He ^{could} have had access to and copies of the Dallas file here. But he does not even know that it exists! Scholarship?

Do not misunderstand me on this: anybody and everybody has access to MY FOIA records, as Dr. Wrono will tell you. For the most part this means that those with whom I disagree can and do get whatever they want. I believe that my use of FOIA makes me surrogate for the people and I live with and abide by this belief and the responsibilities it imposes on me. Thus, in Melanson's case, although I filed the suit to get those King records for a book I had already started, limitations imposed by my health prevent my completing it and, while he could have been regarded as a competitor, he got whatever he wanted. (I put it this way because he did not tell me he was working on a book and instead led me to believe that his interest was for his teaching.)

With regard to my books, it is inevitable that those writing about the facts of the assassinations will be using their content. This is because they were the first, not that this is discernible in his bibliography, which carefully avoids any dates. The first dates to 1965 and by the time Meagher's appeared I had published four. Using them would be normal for those later covering the same material. But not citing them and instead citing those who later used them is not normal and it is not scholarly. I'm so used to being ripped off it doesn't both^{me} me a bit, as I'm sure, again, that Dr. Wrono will tell you. He will also tell you, if you ask, I am sure, that I do help anyone, including competitors.

My point here is not complaint. It is to inform you of whether or not you are considering a work of scholarship and whether the author is qualified and is honest. Praeger got no complaint from me over this in The Murkin Conspiracy and Melanson didn't, either. I was told by the crew that produced a King assassination documentary for BBC, when he was getting them to use some of the silliest nonsense in that book, that he told them I had a

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high opinion of it and had so told him. I never mentioned a word about that book to him and in fact believe it is simply terrible.

There are many points at which it is not possible for me to determine whether it is poor scholarship, ignorance, carelessness or sloppiness. In part this is because he does not have the credentials to which he pretends so I don't know whether he does know what, as an authentic scholar in this matter, he should know. And then he seems to have an absolute phobia on names, either never giving them or ⁴writing until the third time or so. This of course, can indicate too much haste. It simply is not possible to be a full-time teacher, with side interests, ⁵and master the enormous amount of information that is available, for the most part readily available.

an example of this is the ^{mean} Melanson incorrectly identifies as Oswald's commanding officer and in whose testimony he is specific in saying he wasn't. (Donovan) He is used in connection with Oswald's alleged possession of significant military secrets, which he wasn't. (What is secret to the general public is not secret to the military.) There is no mention of the man's name or of the alleged secrets until about the ⁴third time he is mentioned and then the only thing that could be regarded as a possible military secret, which it ⁴wasn't, is omitted.

This has to do with Oswald's alleged knowledge of the U-2 spy plane - and the one thing, had it been secret, that Russians needed is what Melanson omits, height seeking. Melanson says Oswald ⁴knew the flight path, which was not possible. And he wants the reader to believe that Oswald made it possible for the Russians to shoot the plane down. Does it make any sense at all for the CIA to use Oswald to shoot down the CIA's own plane?

Melanson runs on at great length about the CIA's Bissell, which is impressive but irrelevant and also inaccurate - Bissell did not design the U-2. But in the entire manuscript he does not identify the Marine unit in which Oswald served, much as he says about it. But if the U-2 and shooting it down was such a big deal, he ⁴gives ⁵explanation of ~~he makes no reference to the~~ possible intelligence objective in having it shot down - to break up the Paris summit then scheduled between Eisenhower and Khrushchev.

He devotes attention to a issue of LIFE magazine featuring Oswald but he does not mention an issue of The Nation of the same time period that is quite relevant to this manuscript. It featured an article raising the question of an Oswald intelligence link.

I am aware that what I have done is more than you asked. But I ⁴was also aware from reading The MURKIN Conspiracy that the Praeger editor was not able to evaluate what ~~was~~ Melanson wrote and either had no reading by an expert, of whom there are almost none on the King assassination, or, if ⁴one was used, used one without knowledge of the facts. So, I decided to annotate while I read. That is what I did and will send you. However, it

may be a few days before I can get to correcting it - you can see what my typing is - and it will go somewhat slowly then because I am not able to sit at a desk and write. I'll have to hold the pages in a clipboard in one hand and write with the other. I ~~do~~ ^{do} not want you to have to wait until slower fourth-class mail gets it to you.

I also, from my knowledge of his prior work, ~~do~~ ^{do} not want you to be in the position of having to evaluate generalities from me when ~~you~~ you do not know me. Now for your questions:

1. What has the author accomplished? Nothing except puffing himself up unjustifiably.
Content: Nothing new and omits much that is pertinent and well-known. It is not a competent job and the content is largely *imaginaty*, unreal.
Argument: he does argue! It is not reasonable, not rational and is a virtual impossibility.
2. I know of no other book on Oswald as any kind of agent but there are articles, as I indicate above, ~~that~~ ^{that} he ignores, and his work does not compare favorably.
3. Value and importance: It has no value and no importance. Sorry, this is ~~4~~ ⁴ It is a very bad book that will only mislead and misinform and confuse the reader more.
3. Originality and scholarship: The only originality is his untenable theories. This manuscript is anything but scholarly, as my notes will reflect. There is a large body of material in the form of official records and dependable published work that is entirely ignored and he twists, distorts and misrepresents what he does use. He uses the work of others as his own. If this represents his scholarship, I lament for his students!
5. Focus is on the unreal; he skips around in developing that and is ignorant of what could help this development or omits it or both; it is unclear and has the same defects with regard to his presentation of Oswald, where what he does not have is really astounding - and it is well known and in the sources he does cite. ~~and the same can be said for de Mohrenschildt and his developing of his theory;~~ the accuracy is poor and he is often grossly inaccurate, as I indicate in the notes, where I also cite specific passages.

While at my age and in the state of my health I want to avoid all the controversy I can, I cannot and I do not ask that you withhold this or the notes from "elanson. To do so could be regarded as unfairness. I also offer what you do not ask - I'll respond to any questions ^{or} ~~are~~ disagreements or denials.

In every way, this is as bad, as unworthy and as dishonest as book as I can remember with the exception of ~~an~~ ^{the} overtly fraudulent book by ~~a~~ con artists, *McDonald and Morrison*.

If you or anyone else at Greenwood have any question, please ask them. I'd rather not have any other distribution of this and the notes.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
Harold Weisberg

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You may wonder why Melanson suppressed what the defected KGB official said about Oswald and the KGB's belief about him when that could be so important in this manuscript. This is only one of the things Nosenko told the FBI and it included in reports my first copies of which I got at the Archives and published 15 years ago. Copies are also in the FBI reading room, in JFK assassination files. Nosenko also told the FBI that the KGB did not interview Oswald and he explained why, they considered him unbalanced, and ~~that~~ they had had him under observation by the Intourist guide and hotel personnel.

It is true that this need not be true just because Nosenko said it, but all that is known does tend to confirm it. The KGB ordered that he leave when his tourist visa expired in a few days and they'd never have done that with a Marine who had secrets he was giving to them.

Whether or not he believed it, Melanson suppressed all mention of it.

~~Yet~~ ^{Y&F} and more than once he depends on secondary sources and their accounts of what was said by a lone source.

How dependable is Nosenko? The CIA gave him a large sum of money and then hired him as a consultant. This is all in the House ^{Ass} Assassinations Committee report that Melanson quotes and cites so extensively.

But Melanson didn't even say what Nosenko said and then say he does not believe it.

^{Melanson}
and he depends so much on what he says that Oswald told the KGB.

of inclusion
standards and precepts it is unworthy when Bringuier's is worthy.
multitude of articles on the assassination, only two of his are listed.
of all the TV documentaries, only two by CBS are listed. One that NBC-TV did
and Garrison's response are not listed, nor are the many domestic and foreign
entirely
here and abroad in 1988

What I am saying again is that even his bibliography is not scholarly or honest
reflects ignorance, preconceptions, prejudice, ~~and~~ poor judgement of a combination of
~~these flaws, I believe all of them.~~

If there was a legitimate reason for including Spy Catcher in the bibliography
then why not any of the other British books, particularly one devoted entirely to the
British book on the plot to overthrow the British government by its own spookery,
barely mentioned in Spy catcher. The CIA was involved in that!

I've done this in haste and under conditions that ought not intrude themselves into
this kind of work. I've read the manuscript only once, annotating while reading. I decided
to comment and analyze page-by-page because I had read Melanson's The Murkin Conspiracy.
It is a remarkably dishonest book and suffers more ~~other~~ serious defects than publishers
ordinarily could possibly perceive. It also has contrivances designed to make it appear
that Melanson has solved the crime and to stake out his claim to being the ~~top~~
expert on that assassination about which he is ~~also~~ also astoundingly ignorant. In that
book he also addressed none of the alleged evidence of the crime itself ~~and~~ ^{He} was in fact
ignorant of not only that fact but a judicial determination of fact in that crime. In
both books he takes the safe and unscholarly course of assuming guilt. If desired, I can
expand on this.

Soy Saga is permeated by dishonesty, ignorance, stupidities, factual errors,
childish thinking, incompetent and immature pseudo-analyses, fabrications, amateur shrinkery
and it is an ego-trip.

It is trash and the trash stinks!